

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A seed germination and plant supporting utility comprising:

a spacer having a central opening therethrough between first and second sides of said spacer; and

mesh ~~maintained at~~ secured on both of said sides of said spacer, wherein said mesh is held spaced apart a selected distance by said spacer and enshrouds said central opening, said mesh having mesh openings of a size small enough to directly support a seed thereon at said first side of said spacer and to be securely engaged by plant root growth therethrough at said second side of said spacer.

2. (Original) The utility of claim 1 further comprising a first retainer associable with said spacer at one of said sides thereof for holding said mesh thereat.

3. (Original) The utility of claim 2 further comprising a second retainer associable with said spacer at another of said sides thereof for holding said mesh thereat.

4. (Original) The utility of claim 1 wherein said spacer is ring shaped having an inside diameter and outside diameter, wherein said mesh includes first and

second fiber swathes each with a diameter greater than said inside diameter of said spacer and each positioned at a different one of said sides of said spacer.

5. (Original) The utility of claim 4 further comprising first and second removable retainer rings each receivable over a different one of said sides of said spacer and holding said fiber swathes thereat.

6. (Original) The utility of claim 1 wherein said mesh at one of said sides of said spacer has a mesh size greater than mesh size of said mesh at another of said sides of said spacer.

7. (Original) The utility of claim 1 wherein said spacer includes first and second spacer components each defining a part of said central opening and with each having a different one of said sides of said spacer thereat, said first and second spacer components each having an interfacing surface configured to abut one another and surrounding said central opening spaced from said different one of said sides thereat, said mesh also maintained between said interface surfaces.

8. (Original) The utility of claim 1 further comprising a maintenance platform having an opening therethrough for receiving and locating said spacer and said mesh when assembled.

9. (Currently Amended) A seed germination and plant supporting utility comprising:

a first spacer having a passageway therethrough between first and second ends of said first spacer;

a first mesh swathe positioned at said first end of said first spacer and having mesh openings of a size small enough to directly support a seed thereon, and a second mesh swathe positioned at said second end of said first spacer and having mesh openings of a size small enough to be securely engaged by plant root growth therethrough; and

first and second retainers securable to ~~associable with~~ said first spacer at said first and second ends thereof, respectively, adjacent to said first and second mesh swathes positioned thereat to retain said first and second mesh swathes at said first and second ends of said first spacer, each of said retainers having an opening therethrough in correspondence with said first spacer passageway when associated with said first spacer.

10. (Original) The utility of claim 9 further comprising a second spacer having a passageway therethrough between first and second ends of said second spacer, a third mesh swathe positioned at said first end of said second spacer, and a third retainer associable

with said second spacer at said first end thereof adjacent to said third mesh swathe thereat, said third retainer having an opening therethrough in correspondence with said second spacer passageway when associated with said second spacer, said second retainer configured to be associable with both said first and second spacers at said second ends thereof.

11. (Original) The utility of claim 10 wherein said first and third retainers each include a retaining lip adjacent to said openings therethrough configured to abut said first ends of said first and second spacers, respectively, to thereby anchor said first and third mesh swathes.

12. (Original) The utility of claim 9 further comprising a maintenance platform having an opening therethrough, said first retainer comprising a resilient yet deformable material configured to be securely receivable in said opening through said maintenance platform, and said second retainer comprising a lip at said opening through said maintenance platform.

13. (Original) The utility of claim 9 wherein said first and second retainers each include a retaining lip adjacent to said opening therethrough configured to abut a respective one of said first and second ends of said

first spacer when associated therewith to thereby anchor said first and second mesh swathes positioned thereat.

14. (Original) The utility of claim 13 wherein said spacer is ring shaped, and wherein each of said first and second retainers are defined by a ring shaped body configured to be fit over a respective one of said first spacer ends, said retaining lip extending annularly from one end of said ring shaped body inwardly at said opening therethrough.

15. (Currently Amended) A seed germination and plant supporting utility comprising:

a spacer ring having a central opening therethrough between opposite ends of said spacer ring, said spacer ring having an inside diameter adjacent said central opening and outside diameter;

first and second mesh each with a diameter greater than said inside diameter of said spacer ring and each positioned at a different one of said opposite ends of said spacer ring, said first mesh having mesh openings of a size small enough to directly support a seed thereon and said second mesh having mesh openings of a size small enough to be securely engaged by plant root growth therethrough; and

retaining means ~~operative~~ at each of said opposite ends of said spacer ring for retaining said first and second mesh at said opposite ends of said spacer ring ~~maintaining utility assemblage;~~

wherein said first and second mesh are held spaced apart a selected distance by said spacer ring and enshroud said central opening.

16. (Original) The utility of claim 15 wherein said retaining means comprise first and second removable retainer caps having an opening therethrough each receivable over a different one of said opposite ends of said spacer ring and anchoring said first and second mesh thereat.

17. (Original) The utility of claim 15 wherein said first mesh has a mesh size greater than mesh size of said second mesh.

18. (Original) The utility of claim 15 wherein said spacer ring includes first and second spacer components each defining a part of said central opening and with each having a different one of said opposite ends of said spacer ring thereat, said first and second spacer components each having an interfacing surface configured to abut one another and surrounding said central opening spaced from said different one of said

opposite ends thereat, said utility further comprising a third mesh maintained between said interface surfaces.

19. (Original) The utility of claim 15 further comprising a maintenance platform having a plurality of openings therethrough, said platform openings for receiving and locating multiple ones of said spacer ring, said first and second mesh and said retaining means when assembled.

20. (Original) The utility of claim 19 further comprising a containment and feeding apparatus and a positioning structure, said positioning structure having stations configured to receive said maintenance platform with said openings through said platform exposed from both above and below said platform and said positioning structure, said positioning structure configured to be received at said containment and feeding apparatus with said openings through said platform exposed from below to operations of said containment and feeding apparatus.